

Arlington Board of Selectmen

Official Policy Statement

Symmes Property Debt Exclusion

The goal of the Town in acquiring the Symmes property is to control development of the site to the benefit of the entire Town, reflecting its long-term needs and planning objectives.

Without Town control, this site will inevitably be developed in a manner driven by market forces rather than guided by our community's best interest. Significant loss of open space would be likely; increased traffic and other adverse environmental effects could be felt well beyond the surrounding neighborhoods; a severe burden would be placed on Town budgets. Finally, the potential for maintaining and nurturing a health care presence at Symmes would be eliminated.

With Town ownership of the Symmes campus, the Town can control the destiny of the site. Preliminary studies show that the Town can benefit financially, as well as being able to ensure responsible and sensitive development. We ask the residents of Arlington to join us in making the following commitments to this project:

- * *The Town commits* to a balanced mixed-use redevelopment of predominately general office and some medical uses, with a limited residential component that includes affordable housing.
- * *The Town commits* to a redevelopment that is at least self-supporting, generating income (after a three to four year startup period) sufficient to offset the costs of acquisition, renovation and maintenance. We will apply all net income to reduce and eventually eliminate the added tax burden authorized by the debt exclusion. Any income available after satisfying this commitment will be available at the discretion of Town Meeting to help fund Town services.
- * *The Town commits* to maintaining the parcel's present proportion of open space, and to increasing its density of development only to gain limited affordable housing.
- * *The Town commits* to promoting expanded health care services on the site. With Lahey Clinic expecting to remain as a tenant, we will seek the recommendations of Arlington medical professionals and work with area health care institutions to promote additional outpatient services and other medical services.
- * *The Town commits* to an open planning process in which citizens and neighbors can participate in a visioning process, working with the Arlington Redevelopment Board (as the statutory "owner" of the parcel), the Town's Planning Department, and real estate management consultants to develop a final plan to be recommended to Town Meeting in Spring of 2002.

The present owners of the Symmes campus have indicated that they prefer to sell to the Town, but intend to sell privately if the Town does not act. We will have only one chance to gain public control of this critical parcel. If we acquire the property, Town Meeting -- should it later determine that public ownership was not in the Town's best interest -- could make the choice to resell it. If we let the initial opportunity pass, however, it will be gone forever. We urge the Town to take action.

(Unanimously adopted by the Arlington Board of Selectmen, March 12, 2001)